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Cultural Stereotypes: From Dracula's Myth to Contemporary Diasporic Productions

Ileana F. Popa
Virginia Commonwealth University

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Ileana Florentina Popa
BA, University of Bucharest, February 1991
MA, Virginia Commonwealth University, May 2006

Director: Marcel Cornis-Pope, Chair, Department of English

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
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Abstract

CULTURAL STEREOTYPES: FROM DRACULA'S MYTH

TO CONTEMPORARY DIASPORIC PRODUCTIONS

by Ileana Florentina Popa

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006

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This study is focused on a highly topical theme, which belongs to the pluralist practice of cultural studies, and aims at investigating a remarkable phenomenon of identity-shaping and cross-cultural exchange. Starting from an analysis of Dracula as the epitomized image of the Balkans (and of Romania, more specifically) abroad, this paper provides a comprehensive historical and (con)textual analysis of the myth, enlarged to incorporate it into the fictions of exile and to draw the reader's attention to the "demonic" dimension of the Balkan area in general, and the Romanian area in particular.

The first chapter provides a theoretical overview meant to clarify the production of racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes, as well as to suggest a more accurate delimitation of these from the generous (and generously used notion of) cultural encounters. While most stereotypes result from common experience, generally acquired in *a direct way*, due to education, geographic proximity, work relations, political alliances and hostilities, colonial domination, etc. the *cultural stereotypes* are imposed upon us in *an indirect way*, by means of oral or written literature, visual arts, music, and other widely-spread recording means.

The second chapter aims at exemplifying their mechanism and spreading force by analyzing probably the oldest cultural stereotype, contemporary with the appearance of Guttenberg's printing press: the South-Eastern European myth of Dracula. With this goal in mind, I begin by considering the historical origins of the myth, and then explore closely its proliferation through German, Russian, Romanian, Italian, and Byzantine channels as early as Vlad the Impaler's lifetime.

Moving across centuries to Bram Stoker's Dracula, I pay special attention to the cultural environment that made possible the instant success of his novel. I also offer a brief survey of the main directions taken by the impressive interpretive corpus on Bram Stoker's novel, with a particular focus on exploring the main ideas promoted by the Hibernian school of criticism. The chapter ends with an analysis of the Gothic romance and the current vogue of vampire stories in popular culture, be it written, cinematic, or electronic.

In the last chapter, I broaden the discussion by analyzing Dracula's stereotypical correlation with the Transylvanian area as a cultural

phenomenon reflecting the "oxymoronic image," half Oriental and half European, represented by the Balkans in the Western perception. I discuss this as part of a more general pattern that shapes directions for minor cultures that are dramatically "different" from the successful trajectories of the major ones. The painful knowledge of their peripheral position favors a phenomenon of "cultural Bovarism," describing, according to Sorin Antohi, the intellectuals' disposition to leapfrog into a better place in order to assert themselves. In this light, I try to shift attention from Dracula's exclusive association with Romania to the exceptional generation of Romanian intellectuals who left the country at the beginning of the 20th century and who initiated some of the most radical cultural renovations in the West. Constantin Brâncuşi, a pioneer of the abstract sculpture in Paris, Tristan Tzara, Marcel Iancu, and Victor Brauner, the founders of the Dadaist movement in Zürich, Ilarie Voronca, a founder of the surrealist movement in France, and Eugène Ionesco, the most distinguished representative of the Theater of the Absurd, are all figures of global relevance that chose exile as a means of spiritual survival.

Finally, a brief historical survey underlines the Romanians' presence on the American continent, changing the focus from the Western stereotypical correlation of Romania with "Dracula's land," to the Eastern-European representation of America as the "the country of all opportunities" and the "land of the free." I draw attention to the fact that stereotypes depict a movement in a double direction: not only do cultures generate their own stereotypes, but they also perpetuate the stereotypes created by the "significant Other," urging us to reconsider the "central" and "marginal" notions from a more complex perspective.

Chapter I

About Stereotypes and Stereotyping: Definitions, Categories, Examples

What is a stereotype? What is the mechanism that makes it possible? Where does it come from and what is the use of it (if any)? Does it have only negative connotations or may it prove itself useful in certain sociocultural contexts?

Let us examine how stereotypes work by focusing on the relationship between me as writer and my audience. Right now I'm looking at you, my reader, bent over my thesis, as you try to give a quick evaluation of my work: international graduate, originally from Romania, female, approaching a topic with roots in a controversial geopolitical area. Probably the most powerful stereotypes that are starting to emerge now are the gender ones that integrate me in a rather complicated system of representations that foreground a certain kind of sensitivity, since women are seen as more emotional, defenseless, and less competitive than men. The next step would be to place me somewhere in South-Eastern Europe – and, as you are a cultivated reader, you may think of a turbulent place (and remember Ceauşescu's brutal regime and its subsequent collapse), of some popular personalities from sports (such as Năstase/Nasty, Nadia Comăneci or Hagi, who were surprisingly evoked to me in a recent trip to Kauai), or of some prestigious Romanian intellectuals that made a career in exile (Mircea Eliade, Constantin Brâncuşi, Andrei Codrescu, etc.). But most probably you will remember the most popular Western myth about Romania and think

about it as being Dracula's land! I can anticipate your smile now, but I'm rather uncertain whether it is a sympathetic or a condescending one...

*

The first conclusion to draw is that stereotypes represent assumptions, generalizations about a person or an entire group of people. Most of us develop stereotypes in the absence of the "total picture," when we are unable or unwilling to obtain the information that we need in order to make fair judgments about other people or situations. We build up "intellectual images" that try to "fill in the blanks," to create simplified representations, categories or values. Such generalizations, as inaccurate as they may be, are widely spread, not only by word of mouth, but also through television, movies, newspapers, comic books, cartoons, talk shows, pseudo-scientific research, commercials, and even textbooks. Many of us are so accustomed to seeing certain stereotypes that we do not even notice them. We do live in a society that, innocently or not, creates and perpetuates stereotypes as tools and means of categorizing people based on our own subjective experiences.

When assumptions and stereotypes influence our attitudes, we may find that making a fair judgment about someone or something is difficult. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a stereotype as "a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment" – which is not a very wise thing to do, as stereotyping often results from, and leads to intolerance and bigotry. Quite frequently, it is

associated with scapegoating, prejudices, and discrimination. Racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes are labels that people use to define or describe others as belonging to a certain category – and this is not always flattering, as we would rather be judged as individuals and not as members of a group.

a. Ethnic Stereotypes

How effective ethnic stereotypes are can be seen from countless examples with powerful representational impact. Most of us consider the French as being proud, even arrogant, and hopelessly romantic, the Italians loud, talkative, and slow (just remember the saying "let's meet at 8 PM Italian time," which basically means 9), the Spanish passionate and without humor, the Dutch precise, the Germans militaristic and cold, the Japanese tenacious and hardworking, the Chinese quiet and industrious, the Greeks unbeatable traders, the Jews resourceful and commercially astute. Just to prove the aforesaid, a Dutch joke states that "Heaven is where the innkeepers are Swiss, the cooks are French, the policemen are English, the lovers are Italian, and the mechanics are German. Hell is where the lovers are Swiss, the innkeepers are French, the cooks are English, the mechanics are Italian, and the policemen are German." Other stereotypes describe the Arabs as religious fanatics, the Australians as happy-go-lucky Crocodile Dundee style, the Scottish as red-haired, wearing kilts, and playing bag pipes, the Swiss as unrivaled watchmakers and, politically speaking, annoyingly equidistant (the recommendation to be "as neutral as Switzerland" is a widespread saying among Romanians), the Irish as... well, loving their liquor and quarrelsome, the Belgians boring, and so on. As we

may see, such stereotypical generalizations aim at putting some order in an amount of information otherwise very difficult to control, by evidencing what seems to be the most conspicuous quality or fault, an attribute that can individualize a whole ethnic group.

We can see how this mechanism functions from an example inspired by a well-documented episode. In an interesting study on "Ethnic Prejudice, Stereotypes, Discrimination, and the Free Market," Kelley L. Ross described the way in which the stereotypes regarding the Irish immigrants developed in the 19th century, due mainly to their well-known violence that culminated in the worst riot of the century (New York Draft Riot, 1863). Having gained the reputation of being heavy drinkers, lazy, unreliable, and troublesome, the Irishmen filled so often the police vans that they started to be called "Paddy Wagons," after the "Paddies," i.e. the Irish. The prejudices of the employers who excluded the Irish workers from consideration were, therefore, justified, even if this attitude may certainly seem unfair to a contemporary observer of the events. The more so as "their violence was not, as Marxists always like to say, due to the conditions of capitalism or of poverty, because the other groups were equally poor but *rarely fought with each other*" (Ross, "Ethnic Prejudice"). In this case, the stereotyping, as a probabilistic tool, functioned more or less correctly, indicating a high potential of risk, and it appeared to be a "learning from experience" kind of reaction to a rather common type of behavior.

b. Racial Stereotypes

The development of racial stereotypes, on the other hand, has a more evident discriminative dimension. Most often they aim at justifying biased attitudes, such as the ethnocentric and nationalistic interests, for instance, that caused the maelstrom of the two world wars in the first half of the 20th century. The anti-Semitic stereotypes that emerged powerfully in that period regarded the Jews as a "foreign element" threatening to "contaminate" the German stock and culture, and potentially dominate the native population economically and politically. In this case, racial theory, distorted into a pseudo-science, endorsed negative stereotypes that were used as a justification for the atrocious Nazi ideology and program of genocide. Another significant example, whose traces can be followed quite easily due to the development of the movie industry, was the stereotyped representation of the American Indian. Indigenous mascots exhibiting idealized or comic facial features and native dresses, ranging from body-length feathered headdresses to counterfeit indigenous paraphernalia such as tomahawks, face paints, symbolic drums and pipes, reduced hundreds of tribal members to generic cartoon characters. The irony of this case lies in the fact that, according to Joseph Marshall III, the so much displayed portrait of the Indian Head nickel was finally responsible for the fact that Indians could not get jobs in Hollywood to play Indian parts, as they did not look Indian enough (qtd. in "Stereotypes of Native Americans")!

Even more interesting for our analysis is the racial discrimination of the Southern and Eastern Europeans that occurred in the United States at

the beginning of the last century. After the first wave of immigrants from Northern and Western Europe, that included skilled Protestant workers with a high rate of literacy, at the turn of the 20th century immigration to the United States shifted to Southern and Eastern European populations, mainly Catholic, Greek Orthodox, or Jewish, characterized by a high proportion of illiteracy. Grouped in pockets in major cities and starting to compete with the American labor force, they became subject to studies and reports commissioned to prove that Southern and Eastern Europeans were racially inferior to Northern and Western ones. The result of these studies was The Quota Immigration Act of 1921 that put the first numerical restrictions on European immigrants, followed by the Immigration Acts of 1924 and 1929, according to which the total number of immigrants permitted each year was cut by over 80% from the average immigration numbers at the turn of the century. Moreover, the quota for immigrants entering the United States was set at two percent of the total of any given nation's residents in the U.S. *as reported in the 1890 census*, while it is known that most immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe occurred after that date! Such immigration quotas based on racism reflected the discriminatory sentiments that had surfaced earlier during the Red Scare of 1919-1920, and remained unchanged until the administration of Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s. According to Arthur D. Morse, their categorizing as "dangerous" and "different" "would doom Romanian, Polish, and French Jews seeking sanctuary, while the English and Irish quotas lay unused" (98).

c. Gender Stereotypes

Although the consequences of such a biased attitude seem to be less extreme in the case of gender stereotypes, they are, nevertheless, the most lasting and difficult to change in the history of mankind. Living for centuries in a patriarchal society that efficiently developed sexual stereotypes, men and women are captives in a system of values that polarizes them, giving them distinct social roles. Little girls play with dolls and are expected to be more appreciative of ornaments and household props, as they have to be prepared for their future roles of mothers and sexual objects. Little boys play with cars and toy weapons and are allowed more freedom, as they are supposed to become the supporters and defenders of their families. The roots of this attitude that opposes a defensive behavioral pattern to an intrepid one seem to transgress cross-cultural similarities and thrust more deeply in the collective unconscious. Thus, the well-known Jungian dissociation between logos and eros indicates, on the one hand, the female capacity for emotion, and, on the other hand, the male capacity for reason. In other words, while women tend to have irrational opinions, men tend to have irrational sentiments. More recent psychological studies try to explain women's need for closeness and men's need for status, women's dreaded defect of being dependent on men, in spite of some of them becoming just as competitive as men, or the courtship practices that lay such a strong emphasis on attractiveness (Tannen). The stereotype of the female, deprived of power by the male, resorting to stratagems and scheming, and morally condemned by the male as feminine deviousness, or the opposite stereotype

of the beautiful, helpless, alluring woman looking for a man to understand and protect her – do nothing but set up a process of "objectification" (as the feminists would say) of the female body. In other words, physically attractive women are usually portrayed as nonintellectual and sexually wanton. From the social point of view, this difference in status is best reflected by the job market that indicates an overall lower status in the characteristic jobs performed by women (e.g. secretary, nurse) by comparison to those performed by men (e.g. executive, doctor) (Ross, "Gender Stereotypes"). Women, as well as minorities, have often been victimized by discrimination in employment, education, and social services.

d. The Functions of Stereotypes

Are the stereotypes always bad? Some theorists would answer "yes" and, as we could see, they can easily support their view with relevant examples. In their opinion, stereotypes reflect a "deculturalization" phenomenon, whereby the culture of a conquered people is replaced by the new, dominant one. Or, they aim at emphasizing differences and claim the superiority of one culture in one respect or another. According to Sam Vaknin, stereotypes "frequently reflect underlying deleterious emotions," and even if the stereotypes need not necessarily be derogatory or cautionary, most of them are.

Other analysts, however, would argue that stereotypes enforce positive characteristics, such as the preconception that Jews are smart, African-Americans play basketball well, fat people are jolly, good-looking people are sociable, and the English are classy. Moreover, they consider

that, far from being detrimental, stereotypes are useful means of shaping attitudes in an ocean of uncertainty. At least this is the conclusion drawn by a group of researchers in Social Psychology, whose studies were published in 1995 under the aegis of the American Social Psychological Association (Yueh-Ting et. al.). In their opinion, people *do not* ascribe a stereotype to *everybody* in a subject group; which means that, even if we repeat commonplaces about the French being romantic, we do not actually believe that all of them are like that. Moreover, stereotypes *do not* blind us to individual characteristics; on the contrary, it seems that the teachers' judgments about their students, for example, rest almost entirely on student differences in performance, and hardly at all on race, class, or gender stereotypes. Even more paradoxically, stereotypes *do not* always exaggerate group characteristics; rather, they downplay them. According to this study, the racial stereotypes that white Americans hold of black Americans are generally accurate, and when they are inaccurate, they always *under-*estimate a negative characteristic. Thus, the percentage of black American families headed by a female, for example, was 21 at the time of the survey (1978): the whites whose stereotypes were being investigated offered estimates from 8 to 12 percent. Finally, the real function of the stereotypes *is not* to bolster our self-esteem, their primary function is what scientists called "the reality function," that is to establish a relation with a given group starting from the expectations we have (i.e. when looking for a school janitor, we are more likely to approach a young man in overalls than a young woman in overalls), which are based on our life experience. In other

words, stereotypes are merely one aspect of our mind's ability to make generalizations.

This view is supported by a similar study published by Amanda Diekman of Purdue University and Alice Eagly of Northwestern University in 2002. In their opinion, far from being rigid, stereotypes regarding the personality traits of men and women have changed dramatically in the past years to accurately reflect evolving gender roles. Thus, they noted that "women are perceived as having become much more assertive, independent, and competitive over the years" (qtd. in Vaknin), which confirms the theory that stereotypes can also be regarded as "selective filters" that measure the probability of an individual to behave in a certain way.

e. Conclusions

The modern understanding of stereotypes as "probabilistic perceptions of group differences" (McCauley 239) is based on the analysis of the motivational and cognitive mechanisms that make possible their emergence. According to David J. Schneider, stereotypes like cognitive mechanisms are "necessary simplifications," "part of a mental matrix" (364) that forms our belief structure, and they actually enrich our knowledge about a certain person by placing him/her in a more inclusive category. As motivational mechanisms, stereotypes reflect the power relationships within the society at large: while powerful people manifest little interest in the behavior of less powerful persons, the latter ones tend to pay more attention to the individual features of their more powerful counterparts, and usually overemphasize them (Schneider 369). Far from being innocent, stereotypes

contain a cultural and political slant that aims at defining us in relationship to another, and paradoxically build *subjective* hierarchies through their very attempt of *objectifying* the Other. Even more importantly, *they never function independe*ntly: the filter they represent is one with big holes that lets go a mix-up of concurrent representations, be them ethnic, racial, or gender-based, in depicting an individual.

*

Coming back to our initial example, we may reanalyze it now from a better perspective. Ostensibly, my reader will not be as gender-biased as I expected him (or her) to be; on the contrary, being a member of the academic community, his interest will focus on the value of my work, and not on its inherent limitations resulting from my belonging to the minority group of non-native speakers in an English Department. The considerable pressure of a major culture in contact with a small one, as well as my reader's privileged position as appraiser of my work, on the other hand, will establish an obvious hierarchical power relationship that places me at its lower end. In the absence of more consistent data, the probability of working with generalizations is higher, and my inclusion under the politically unstable South-Eastern Europe umbrella becomes very likely. On this rather grey background Dracula's bloody image emerges powerfully as a vibrant color stain, which fits the general definition of the area as a turbulent one. This conveniently reduces my analysis to the question whether my reader's perception of this cultural imprint is a positive or a negative one. In order to give this study a chance, I will consider that this

time the stereotype does underestimate a negative characteristic, that the insistent recycling of the information about the Romanian vampire has diluted its ominous connotations, and that my reader's smile is a sympathetic or generous one... And thus, I shall proceed in my attempt to disclose this stereotype's historical, political, and cultural trajectory across the ocean, from Transylvanian mountains to the New World.

CHAPTER II

Cultural Stereotypes. Dracula–the Epitomized Image of the Balkans and of Romania Abroad

As we could see from the examples discussed in the previous chapter, most stereotypes result from common experience, generally acquired in a direct way, due to education, geographic proximity, work relations, trade, political alliances and hostilities, colonial domination, etc. When such experience is acquired in an indirect way, namely by a mediated import from other cultures by means of oral or written literature, visual arts, music, etc., we are dealing with ***cultural stereotypes***, or stereotypes impressed upon us *through a cultural channel.* Thus, we try to put order in the extremely generous (and generously used) notion of cultural encounters, defined by various interpreters as "encounters crossing the boundaries of our personally constructed categories (i.e. as a form of stereotypes)" (Lillhannus), or as "collective frames that probably come from a 'cultural matrix,' receptacle for myths, stories, and impressions common to one or more groups" (Jucquois-Delpierre). In contrast with the first category of stereotypes I have already analyzed and which reflects our capacity to predict things based on our own experience, cultural stereotypes go through a reverse process, making us accept things we become acquainted with not by direct experience, but by assimilating a type of information offered to us with the authority and persuasive power of some widely-spread recording means, such as books, movies, cartoons, net channels, musicals, and so on.

My analysis has thus kept close to the original meaning of the word "stereotype" itself, which initially described a duplicate impression of an original *typographical* element, turning in time into a metaphor for any set of ideas identically and collectively reproduced.

I contrast, therefore, the notion of cultural stereotypes (or culturally-transmitted stereotypes) to the notion of culture-embedded stereotypes, or "culture wars" (564) advanced by David J. Schneider, for instance, who analyzes the conflictual relationship between prejudiced and discriminated cultures, thus giving the term a completely different connotation. However, I am not going to investigate in this chapter all the transmission channels of such stereotypes and identify the characteristics of each. What I am interested in is to reveal their emerging mechanisms and spreading force by analyzing probably the oldest cultural stereotype, imposed through a cultural channel almost at the same time with the appearance of Gutenberg's printing press in 1452: the South-Eastern Europe myth of Dracula.

a. The historical origins of the myth: Vlad III Dracula and the proliferation of the myth through German, Russian and Romanian channels

Known to most Westerners as a blood-sucking vampire whose sinister castle lies somewhere in Transylvania, Dracula virtually sums up all their knowledge about Romania. This is due entirely to Bram Stoker's novel, published in 1897, "a masterpiece of horripilation" (Sanders 469) that introduced the first and most famous fictional monster from a long series of

Gothic productions. But few of them know that Stoker's novel represents only the resurrection of a horrifying story that circulated throughout Europe since the 15th century, from the very time of prince Dracula's reign (also known as Vlad the Impaler, 1431-1476). The impact of his personality on the contemporaries' imagination was so powerful, that the Wallachian prince turned into a fictional character already during his lifetime. His legend terrified the Medieval Europe long before Bram Stoker's novel, and we find it useful to start by deciphering this first wave of beliefs that turned into the most powerful Gothic stereotype ever, before moving on.

Where does the nickname "Dracula" come from and why did the life and deeds of the Wallachian prince have such a fascinating influence on the next generations? Born in 1431, Vlad inherited the name of "Dracula" or "Drăculea" from his father, Vlad Dracul – who had been vested by the Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg as Knight of the Dragon Order due to his loyalty and bravery in fight. It was a great honor to belong to this Order, and at the time only few foreign princes were granted this privilege: the king of Aragon and Naples, Alfons V, the Serb prince Stefan Lazarevici, the king of Poland, Vladislav Jagello, and the Lithuanian duke Witold. This *Ordo Draconis* was a golden medallion representing a dragon and Vlad, proud of his belonging to this restricted caste, ordered it to be imprinted on the coins issued during his reign and even painted on the walls of the churches he built. The word "dracu" means in Romanian both "dragon" and "devil" – and in time the latter usage became prevalent, probably as a consequence of the legendary cruelty of Vlad Dracul's son, Vlad the Impaler.

Vlad Ţepeş (the Impaler) Dracula ruled three times, in 1448, between 1456-1462, and for two months in1476, in the small principality of Wallachia, located in the Southern part of modern-day Romania. His foreign policy was dominated by a continuous struggle for autonomy directed not only against the powerful Ottoman Empire, but also against the Saxon traders who disobeyed his orders. Between 1449 and 1450, for instance, he initiated a bloody (and widely publicized by the German sources) incursion against the latter ones, burning to the ground their towns and villages. All their inhabitants – men, women, and children running perhaps into tens of thousands – were impaled or otherwise executed, and it is mainly due to this incident that the hair-raising tales about his cruelty started to spread. The truth of these tales of incredible savagery was surprisingly confirmed by Dracula himself, who, in the winter of 1462, after a raid along the Southern bank of the Danube, described the way he punished his prisoners as follows: "I have killed men and women, old and young... 23,884 Turks and Bulgarians, without counting those whom we burned alive in their homes or whose heads were chopped off by our soldiers..." (qtd. in Axinte). This terrifying head-count was accompanied by two sacks of "samples" (cut heads, noses, and ears), and the sight of the impaled victims impressed even sultan Mohammed II, the conqueror of Constantinople, who, "overcome by amazement, admitted that he could not win the land from a man who does such great things and above all knows how to exploit his rule and who ruled over his subjects in this way" (a Greek chronicler of the time, qtd. in Axinte).

In spite of the fact that this was an epoch of great anxiety – when Europe was beleaguered by the Hussite wars, when the 100-year war between England and France resumed, when the Inquisition enjoyed the peak of its power (the very year Vlad Ţepeş was born, Joan d'Arc was tried and executed in Rouen) and Constantinople fell into the clutches of the Ottoman Empire, an epoch of bold geographic discoveries (in 1492 Columbus reached America) – nothing seemed to exert a more lasting influence on people's imagination than the tale of the cruel excesses of the Wallachian prince. Three major sets of cult and oral narratives about Dracula–Romanian, Russian, and German–started to emerge during his lifetime, displaying startling similarities that place the authenticity of the facts thus recorded beyond any doubt.

In Germany, the stories about Dracula knew fourteen editions in Nüremberg, Augsburg, Strassbourg, and Leipzig. The oldest document mentioning Dracula, known as the St. Gall Manuscript (Switzerland), was compiled by Brother Jacob, a monk from the Monastery of Gorion. Written in Low German, probably in 1462, it contains scenes of unbelievable cruelty that depict Dracula as a "bloodthirsty berserker," comparing him with the "prosecutors of Christendom, such as Herod, Nero, and Diocletian" (qtd. in McNally and Florescu 188). This German description may have suggested the vampire analogy to Stoker later on, assumption further supported by the interesting fact that the word "vampire" itself represents an extremely rare case in English of a loan from a Balkan language (according to some etymologists it is derived from the Turkish word *uber*, i.e. witch, and it is

commonly used in Bulgarian, Serbo-Croat, and Romanian). What gives this manuscript distinctiveness is its minute description of Vlad's atrocities, as well as the repeated mentioning of the exact number of his victims, which varied from a few hundreds to more than 30,000. This manuscript also launched the striking image of the "huge forest" of impaled victims that made quite a career later on.

An important contribution to the spreading of the horror stories about Vlad was also made by the German Minnesinger Michael Beheim, who wrote a long poem titled About a Wallachian Tyrant Called Prince Dracula (Von Einem Wutrich der Hiess Trakle Waida von der Walachei) in 1463. The shorter and less violent story written by Antonio Bonfini, King Mathias' official historian, (Rerum ungaricarum decades..., 1543) is considered the most authoritative account about the Wallachian prince. According to some researchers, he probably knew Dracula personally from 1462 onward and may have gotten the Dracula anecdotes firsthand (McNally and Florescu 220). Bonfini's chronicle was retold in German and Latin a century later by Sebastian Münster in Cosmographiae Universales (Basel, 1572), which was translated into English and French later on, and also seems to have inspired the work of the Czech archbishop Ian of Puchov.

At the opposite pole, in Russia, accounts about Dracula's appalling deeds are known to have been reported to the Grand Duke of Moscow in the 1480's. Another story about the Wallachian prince, Skazanie o Drakule Voevode, is said to have come to the ears of Czar Ivan the Terrible himself. The manuscript, written by the monk Ephrosin in 1490, can be found in the

Kirillov-Belozersky Monastery Collection in Leningrad, and it is considered to be one of the first examples of belletristic writings in Russian. This account insists on Dracula's abandonment of Orthodoxy as a result of his long years of imprisonment at the court of the Hungarian King Mathias, and also on his keen sense of justice. One of the stories mentioned in this chronicle (and not recorded in any other known sources) seems to have inspired Bram Stoker in his description of Renfield in Dracula, four centuries later:

> It was said about him that even when he was in jail, he could not abandon his bad habits. He caught mice and bought birds in the market. And he tortured them in this way: some he simply impaled, others he cut their heads off, and others he plucked their feathers out and let them go. (qtd. in McNally and Florescu, 201).

The Romanian sources, on the other hand, are exclusively oral and they have been handed down through the ballads and traditions of the Romanian peasants; they are longer and understandably more forgiving of Dracula's atrocious deeds. His cruelty is generally justified by his nationalistic impulses and his unwillingness to pay the yearly tribute and supply the levy of children to the Turkish infantry troops. These accounts make reference to him both as Dracula and "the impaler," and this double denomination is interestingly confirmed by some missives written by Vlad and kept in the archives from Brasov and Sibiu, which bear the signature "Drakulya." They depict him as a "severe, but also just" ruler (qtd. in

McNally and Florescu 207), who tried to eradicate thievery and laziness from his lands through extreme but necessary measures.

In addition to these three major channels through which the Dracula myth started to proliferate throughout Europe, there were other numerous accounts at the time that made reference to Vlad's misdeeds. Italian sources include reports written by Venetian and Genoese representatives at Constantinople, today kept in the Vatican archives. Pope Pius II's memoirs (1584) mention Dracula's crimes reported to him by his legate at Buda, Nicholas of Modrussa, who also left a remarkable portrait of the prince. Worth mentioning are also the Byzantine chroniclers Leonikos Chalkonkondyles, Michael Doukos, and Kritoboulos of Imbros, who recorded Dracula's victorious campaign against Mohammed II in 1462. His name is brought up not only by Turkish and Hungarian sources (such as I. Thuroczy's Der Hungern Chronica, published in Nürnenberg in 1534), but also by Czech, Serbian, English, and French travelers, whose 15th century narratives turned into the first best-sellers of the medieval Europe.

What do all these stories say and show (one cannot ignore the abundance of ghastly pictures they display) about Dracula? Without exception, they present him as an atrocious and merciless monster who does not hesitate to fasten the turbans of the curt Turk messengers with nails, who boils his prisoners and forces their mates to eat them, who orders them to be pierced through with a sharp stake or to be cut to pieces, who gathers all the beggars in the country at a great feast and then burns the building they are in to the ground, who impales his own boyars when they

fail to properly answer his questions, and so on. So great was the fear the people felt for him that a story says that, during his reign, a golden cup was placed at a fountain and, in spite of the rampant poverty that characterized those times, nobody dared to steal it! Such narratives gradually became part of both the Eastern and Western European lore, projecting the Wallachian hero to mythical proportions. Therefore, even if, according to Radu Florescu, "Dracula attempted to legislate virtue and morality through the use of terror" (qtd. in Axinte), the already stereotyped image of the prince was replaced by that of a bloodthirsty monster, with no parallel to any other character in medieval history.

b. The revival of the myth in Irish version: Bram Stoker's Dracula and the fictions of exile

Published exactly one hundred years after the death of the first Gothic writer, Horace Walpole, Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897) represents a fascinating literary case in that its history as a text "arguably mirrors the change and development of the [critical] field over the last half of the twentieth century" (Hughes and Smith 1). Initially circumscribed to the marginal status of a popular genre and excluded from serious intellectual consideration, the novel has proliferated in time numberless readings, ironically reflecting at different levels the shape-shifting nature of its own hero. Even more significantly, the novel has brought back to life the oldest Gothic stereotype ever, turning the whole Balkan area into an out-of-history, mythical space, and giving it for a long time the only recognizable spiritual identity in the Westerners' eyes.

Thus, Dracula was traditionally read as the Freudian text *par excellence*, representing either a perfect illustration of the Oedipal complex (Richardson; Roth), or an expression of the cultural neurosis of the time (Punter); this was due to the association of vampirism with the subversive desires which disrupted Victorian morals and sexual codes. Other interpretations regarded it, on the contrary, as an expression of the "Positivist psychiatric paradigm" (Mighall 71), reflecting the Lombrosian and Nordauesque theory of the pathological abnormality of the genius. Feminist interpretations have regarded it as a symptom of the author's fear of assertive womanhood embodied in the figure of the "New Woman" (Farson), while materialist readings have considered it as "a fable of invasion from without" (Richards 148), indicative of the British xenophobic fears at the increasing influx of Eastern European (especially Jewish) immigrants. Read in turn as an urban Gothic (Spencer), and as a "closet drama" (Shaffer), as a capitalist allegory (Moretti), and a reform novel (Croley), as a degeneration drama (Pick), and a roman-à-clef (Glover), Dracula is a polymorphous text that can be approached through various interpretive lenses without ever exhausting its productive hermeneutic patterns.

More interesting for my analysis, though, is the historical relocation project attempted by the Hibernian school of criticism, which aimed at reading the novel in a postcolonial key, as "a text of colonial resistance and self-invention" (Valente 3) in rapport to the British Empire. The Irish Dracula school considers vampirism as an imperial contagion and Dracula as belonging to "the Anglo-Irish Gothic tradition, a predominantly

nineteenth-century mode of writing which struggled obsessively with the cultural meaning of Ireland and Irishness" (Glover 25). This interpretation, compellingly elaborated in book-length studies by David Glover and Joseph Valente, among others, attempts to include the novel in the fictions of exile produced by the Irish authors from a position of marginality to the empire; this position justifies both the indirectness of their narrative, and its projection into exotic, geographically hyperbolized landscapes. Notwithstanding their thorough methodological approach, which I am going to briefly explore below, I consider this perspective irremediably reductive, as it ignores the broader historical and cultural implications of the myth within the South-Eastern European area. My own analysis aims at investigating a remarkable phenomenon of identity-shaping and cross-cultural exchange triggered by the publication of Bram Stoker's novel in 1897, which eventually turned Dracula into the epitomized image of Transylvania (and through extension, of the Balkan area in general) in the West.

As Joseph Valente correctly puts it, "Ireland and the Irish Question may be said to constitute the 'other scene' of Dracula, a never fully present correlative to the official narrative concerning the Balkans and the Eastern Question. [...] Like any proper dream or fantasy scenario, Ireland intersects with the manifest content, here Transylvania, in an overdetermined manner: verbally, topographically, historically, politically" (51). This overlapping of identities reflects the invasion anxieties prevalent in the epoch, as well as

the idea of a subversive assault of a barbaric periphery upon metropolitan British culture.

Although the Victorian years marked the apogee of national and imperial glory, the end of the 19th century was characterized by an increasing preoccupation with social and spiritual ills that explains this "anti-rational revival of Gothic extravagance" (Sanders 468). The works of writers as diverse in their styles as Hardy, Wilde, Wells, Stevenson, and Conrad reflect this obsession with crime, anarchy, decadence, or simply with the "paraphernalia of horror" (Sanders 468), which is a characteristic of the time. As Brantlinger compellingly demonstrated, the principal themes of the imperial Gothic at the time revolved around the idea of individual regression, or of going native; *the invasion of civilization by the forces of barbarism or demonism;* and the reduced opportunities for adventure and heroism in the modern world [emphasis added] (see the discussion of these themes in Zorn 2). Although Dracula was often assumed to be a simple horror novel, it can be read as a tale of the second type, representing the struggle between the heroic forces of order and the demonic entities that try to destroy it. This is where the Hibernian school of criticism has found a productive interpretive break, shifting in interesting ways the understanding of the novel by producing the seductive scenario of Dracula's essential Irishness.

The literary sources of Bram Stoker's novel discussed by the Hibernian school of criticism symptomatically align it to the Irish tradition of Gothic fiction. The most often cited influence on Stoker's work is Carmilla

(1872), by Sheridan Le Fanu, an earlier vampire fiction that Stoker admits to have read in his short story "Dracula's Ghost" (1914). Another source of inspiration was the account of the Balkans in With "The Unspeakables"; Or, Two Years' Campaigning in European and Asian Turkey made by his brother, George Stoker, where the author describes, among other things, the Bulgarian rural population he encountered. Also, Stoker seems to have consulted Major E.C. Johnson's 1885 book, On the Track of Crescent: Erratic Notes from the Piraeus to Pesth, in which the author compares the Szekelys and the Wallachs of Transylvania (we are not going to dwell here on the historical inaccuracies of this account) with the stereotypically lazy Irishmen.

The political and cultural context in which the novel was published provides an apparently solid basis for this interpretation. In spite of the fact that Stoker spent much of his life not in Ireland, but in England, as Henry Irving's theatrical impresario, and in spite of his manifest attraction to the politics of English liberalism, he remained a supporter of his culture of origin and, at the political level, an advocate of the Irish Home Rule. Moreover, his first novel, The Snake's Pass (1890), is set in an imaginary Ireland, and was confessedly read as an "Irish novel" by the liberal leader William Gladstone, albeit Stoker had lived in London for over a decade. This prevalent perception of the author as an Irish émigré, explains the interpretation of Dracula in the same key, as a typical Irish Gothic novel, and the interpretation of the Transylvanian topography as a "twin geography" (Glover 35) that overlaps with the author's native land. The

cultural backwardness and multiethnic profile of its inhabitants, their similarly beleaguered historical background, as well as their apparent regress to a pre-modern stage of thriving superstitions and anxieties, establishes an allegorical, geopolitical connection between the Transylvanian area and Ireland. Even the appalling scenes of child theft and cannibalism, or Harker's gloomy description of Dracula's Castle, seem to echo the Irish lore rather than local, East-European traditions (Valente 53). More importantly, in making Transylvania a privileged metaphor for his Irish home, Stoker echoes the foreign policy discourse of the time, which sought in the Hungarian paradigm a settlement to the Irish Question that had grown highly explosive toward the end of the century. As an annexed territory to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Transylvania had achieved a sort of local autonomy, a semidetached status in 1867 that seemed to provide the Irish nationalists of the time with a model to follow (Valente 54).

Dracula himself is seen, from this perspective, as either a displaced Irish aristocrat who tries to relocate himself and regain his feudal glory, or as an embodiment of the Irish urban *lumpen,* perceived as both a racial and social threat by the metropolitan British culture. According to Valente, the hero's name may be a pun on the Gaelic phrase *droch fhola,* meaning "bad blood," which points not only to his vampirism as imperialist contagion, but also to a degenerative process that endangers from within the very existence of the hegemonic groups. This double perspective on Dracula, simultaneously seen as an agent and an object of colonialism, turns him into a sort of "metrocolonial vampire" (Valente 51), who performs a reversed

colonization whereby the margins aim at literally sucking the blood of the empire.

No matter how gripping this reading may be, it fails to account for the almost five century-long "haunting" presence of Dracula's myth in the South-Eastern and Central European area. The construction of the "other" in Hibernian version is fascinating but rather insular and historically one-dimensional, and the numerous cultural allusions spread throughout Stoker's text contradict it at least in part. Moreover, when looked at in their entirety, the sources used to document his book are indicative for Stoker's attempt to broaden his dialogue beyond the local nationalistic boundaries of the Irish Question, and include it in a larger colonial discourse focused on the Balkans and the Eastern Question as a whole. The thoroughness of Stoker's research is revealed by one of his main characters, Dr. Van Helsing, who is the author's mouthpiece in the novel: "I have studied, over and over again since they came into my hands, all the papers relating to this monster" (89).

It is well known that Stoker consulted Sebastian Münster's Cosmography, first mentioned to him by a Hungarian professor, and friend of his, from Budapest. Also, during the summer of 1890, while on vacation in Whitby, Stoker came across a book entitled An Account of the Principalities of Walachia and Moldavia, written by William Wilkinson. He copied much of the section regarding "voivode Dracula" into his notes (now held at the Rosenbach Museum in Philadelphia), including a footnote Wilkinson made to the effect that "Dracula in Wallachian language means

Devil." He selected the name of his character (after his first intention of calling him "Count Wampyr") based on this account, and the fact that there is nothing in Wilkinson's book about Vlad's atrocities as "the Impaler" explains why Stoker's story never refers to such incidents and justifies the rather sophisticated profile he gave to his hero.

Stoker also used as a source Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould's The Book of Were-Wolves (1865), wherefrom he took over the misspelling *vlkoslak* for the Serbian word *vukodlak* (*vârcolac* in Romanian), word that, in the author's opinion, connects vampires and were-wolves together. The Folktales of the Magyars (1889), by Reverend W. Henry Jones and Lewis L. Kropf, as well as 'Magyarland': being the Narrative of our Travels Through the Highlands and Lowlands of Hungary, a study signed by "A Fellow of the Carpathian Society" (1881), provided Stoker with an incorrect historical background that explains his introduction of Dracula as a "descendant from Attila and the Huns" (2). Finally, Stoker's main historical sources about Transylvania are Emily Gerard's article "Transylvanian Superstitions" (1885) and her book The Land beyond the Forest (1888), which describe the Transylvanian Saxons' religion, education, and way of life. Gerard's accounts also provided Stoker with some of the folklore surrounding Dracula and his castle, as well as with the (incorrect) rendering of "nosferatu" as the "undead." Even more interestingly, she is the first one who launches the discussion of the contrast between this "land of superstitions" and the scientific impulses of the West, idea that will be turned into the main theme of his novel by Stoker later on:

> Transylvania might well be termed *the land of superstition*, for nowhere else does this curious crooked plant of delusion flourish as persistently and in such bewildering variety. It would almost seem as thought he whole species of demons, pixies, witches, and hobgoblins, *driven from the rest of Europe by the wand of science*, had taken refuge within this mountain rampart, well aware that there they would find secure lurking places, whence they might defy their persecutors yet awhile. [emphasis added] (Gerard 130)

Stoker was obviously aware of the fact that Dracula was a historical figure whose notoriety had crossed lands and centuries and whose significance proliferated to mythical proportions. Actually, as we have already demonstrated, the insistent, almost seven year long documentation that preceded the actual writing of his book indicates the author's interest in providing his reader with an authentic geographical and historical background that could give him a sense of his hero's enormous prominence in the Eastern European area. It was as such that it came to his attention four centuries later, to become, through the genius of the Irish author, one of the most powerful Gothic stereotypes ever.

Stoker's handling of the hero within a broader historic and geographical context is apparent from the very first paragraph of the novel, where Johathan Harker acknowledges "the impression ... that we were leaving the West and entering the East" (1). The entire Balkan peninsula is "orientalized" not only implicitly, by reinforcing the advanced/backward

binarism, but also explicitly, by describing the Slovaks as "some old *Oriental* band of brigands" [emphasis added] (5). Thus, Stoker's account is part of a larger discourse of power that turns the Orient, as Edward Said has argued, into "a European invention [...] a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (1). Accordingly, Harker's description of Transylvania is that of a pre-modern world, a place governed by supernatural forces and idolatries. As the author points out from the very beginning, "every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool" (4):

> Having some time at my disposal when in London, I had visited the British Museum, and made search among the books and maps in the library regarding Transylvania... I find that the district he [i.e. Dracula] named is in the extreme east of the country, just on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia and Bukovina, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe. (2)

The place is superlatively defined in terms of wilderness and mystery, as a sort of *terra incognita* surrounded by an aura of danger and indeterminacy. The description of the romanticized, savage landscape, scattered with "little towns and castles on the top of steep hills" and constantly threatened by "great floods" (4) is obviously value-laden and hierarchical, contrasting, according to some critics, the rampant superstitions of the East with the

scientific disposition of the West (Zorn). If we pay attention to the adjectival determinacy of this account, we cannot help but notice that it establishes a rhetoric of desire and rejection at the same time, which builds violent polarities indicative of the Occident's biases towards the eccentricity of the East. The people themselves are remnants of a glorious past, and their simplicity and barbaric appearance are just symptoms of an incurable degenerative process:

> In the population of Transylvania there are four distinct nationalities: Saxons in the south, and mixed with them the Wallachs, who are the descendants of the Dacians; Magyars in the west, and Szeleys in the East and North. I am going among the latter, who claim to be descendants from Attila and the Huns. (2)
>
> [...] At every station, there were groups of people, sometimes crowds, and in all sorts of attire. Some of them were just like the peasants at home or those I saw coming through France or Germany, with short jackets and round hats and homemade trousers... The women looked pretty, except when you got near them, but they were very clumsy about the waist. They had all full white sleeves of some kind or other, and most of them had big belts with a lot of strips of something fluttering from them like the dresses in a ballet, but of course petticoats under them... (4)

Leaving apart the historical inaccuracies and the sometimes humorous (and equally inadvertent) details that color this description, one can recognize here the very image of the Other, reflecting his backwardness, provinciality, plainness, and exoticism, in short his inferior status when perceived through the colonial gaze. His unprivileged position is threatening due to its very fluidity, and provides a good background for the introduction of Dracula, whose character is certainly not an ordinary one:

> His face was strong – a very strong – aquiline, with a high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere. *His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose,* and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth [...] was fixed and *rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips*, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. [...] *his ears were pale and at the tops extremely pointed;* the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of *extraordinary pallor.*
>
> [His hands] were rather coarse – broad, with squat fingers. Strange to say, *there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point.* As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that *his breath was*

> *rank*, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal [emphases added]. (21-22)

The first observation to be made is that the author had evidently seen the well-known picture of the prince before (today it can be found in Ambras Castle, Austria; the painting was made between 1462-74, during Dracula's captivity in Hungary), as the details regarding his aquiline nose, bushy eyebrows, curled hair, and heavy moustache depict it quite accurately. Secondly, the elements of this portrait are highly characteristic for what we call today the Gothic stereotypes so often used in thrillers or seen in movies and cartoons: the "massive eyebrows [...] almost meeting over the nose," the "peculiarly sharp white teeth" that "protruded over the lips," the "pale" and "pointed ears," the "long nails... cut to a sharp point," the "hairs in the center of the palm," his "rank breath" and "extraordinary pallor" – all suggest both the hero's closeness to death and his beastly dimension. Add to all these Dracula's predilection for dressing in black clothes, for sleeping in coffins, his vampire taste for blood, his abnormal strength and the ability to easily climb the walls, his power of metamorphosis into bats or wolves, his capacity to become so small that he can slip through a hair-breadth space at the tomb door, the fact that he throws no shadow and the mirror never reflects his image – and we can recognize in this picture of extraordinary force an image so vivid and *complete*, that it has lasted unaltered to the present day. In fact, in this lies Bram Stoker's genius: nothing that followed his book brought anything else but shades to this initial portrait of the hero.

Even more significant for my analysis is the insinuating motif of the stranger that permeates the narrative, an example of "colonial mimicry" (Bhabha 125) whereby the subaltern forces subversively attempt to assimilate themselves to the metropolitan center in order to destabilize it. Rather than reflecting "the efforts of the superintending colonial elite to imitate and internalize metropolitan norms" (Valente 64), such an assault indicates, in my opinion, a more interesting phenomenon of invasion of the dominant culture by a formerly privileged one, that parasitically attempts to preserve its identity by literally feeding on its host (to use J. Hillis Miller's terms). The colonial scenario is replaced, in my interpretation, by the invasionist one; hierarchical cohabitation is replaced by complete suppression and finally by the annihilation of the symbolical authority represented by the metropolis. "Mastering" the center is a form of exploding the idea of center itself by asserting the voracious domination of the one-who-can-be-not:

> Well, I know that, did I move or speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble; am boyar; the common people know me, and I am master. But a stranger in a strange land; he is no one... (23)

From this perspective, as Jerrold I. Hogle put it, Dracula "becomes not just a Gothic 'other,' but 'foreignness' incarnate and 'otherness' itself" (206). His suggestive defining in terms of absolute abstractness points to Dracula's actual lack of identity, and it is a symptom of the degenerative

process that contaminated not only his homeland but its inhabitants themselves. Antithetically, all the other characters juxtaposed to him are respected members of the liberal bourgeois order; they are engaged in a crusade for which they are equipped with phonographs, cameras, and typewriters, and embody "a world of mechanical and electronic reproduction" (Glover 44). Moreover, references to law, physiognomy, criminal anthropology, brain physiology, and psychical research abound throughout the novel, suggesting a clear relationship between character building and the emerging scientific interest of the epoch. Conveyed as a violent clash between modernity and atavistic traditionalism, between rationalism and superstition, their enterprise has at stake the survival of Western civilization itself.

A question may emerge, however, as to why Stoker's hero leaves his native land, a place where his authority is never challenged or questioned, to relocate himself in London, the very outpost of Western civilization. What justifies his (socially speaking) suicidal attempt to blend into "the mist of the whirl and rush of humanity" (23)? His discourse is contradictory, pointing both to his loving desire to be assimilated by the new culture, and to his equally powerful impulse to control the new environment he is immersed in. "...I have come to know your great England; and to know her is to love her," confesses Dracula to Johathan Harker, just to blunder a few moments later by adding that "I have been so long master that I would be master still" (23). What sends him away is nothing else but the threat of anonymity posed by "these days of dishonorable peace" (33) that silenced the pride of a

"conquering race" (30). Turned into a signifier that lost its value through repetition and lack of proficient readers able to release his colossal power, Dracula is a shadow that is haunting a decaying land inhabited by terrified people trapped in an age of innocence. One has no power when there is no one to acknowledge it, or to challenge it. His invasionist attempt is justified by his craving need for status; ontologically, he looks for a more significant background in order to assert himself.

His enamored discourse is only half-deceiving, though. Dracula picks England and no other location because the volumes crammed in his library construct a culturally appealing image of this place. His exile is a voluntary one, and his reasons are not very different from the ones of any émigré allured by the mirage of finding a new home in a desirable land. Ironically, the very idea of home is deconstructed in Stoker's novel, as his hero is purchasing the estate at Purfleet not to peacefully inhabit it, but to launch his attack against his new home country from an advantageous position, and finally to destroy it. Moreover, it implies a physical relationship that is potentially fertile, and his conquering of the epitome of civilized West is even more threatening as it may give birth to monsters. His vampire practices turn the subjects of his desire into a new diseased race that embodies the historically stagnant, primitive, and "impure" East, performing (and mirroring up to a point) a reverse colonization of the British empire. "Knowing" the Other may mean "loving" it, but also devouring it in the process.

*

The public's response to Dracula at the time of publication was more than a favorable one: the book was an instant success and it was reissued as a sixpenny paperback edition in 1900. Worth mentioning for its inclusion of the novel in an illustrious tradition is the Daily Mail enthusiastic comment: "In seeking a parallel to this weird, powerful and horrible story, our minds revert to such tales as The Mysteries of Udolpho, Frankenstein, Wuthering Heights, The Fall of the House of Usher, and Marjery Quelher. But Dracula is even more appalling in its gloomy fascination than any of these" (qtd. in Farson 162). Part of this fascination was due to the fact that it came "at the right time." Although there had been other vampire stories before Stoker's, the fact that it appeared in late Victorian England, tormented by end-of-century anxieties, latent sexuality, obsession with degeneration, and imperialistic incertitude, provided it a good start. Only three decades later, Dracula's celebrity will be reinforced by its productive career in the movie industry that will increase the interest in the vampire figure exponentially. As I am going to argue in my next chapter, the cinematographic representations of Dracula reflect the continuous transformation of the hero from a predator, a foreign and unassimilated element, into an uncanny, sympathetic figure, a symbolic and less threatening representation of our repressed self.

*

An immediate effect of this renewed interest in the character was the rendering of Transylvania, and through extension, the whole Balkan area, as a retrograde, out-of-history place, representative for the East-West

relationship in that it reflects a "Manichean struggle between good and evil, white and black, light and darkness, purity and corruption" (Andras). Its identity formula, reflected in the literary works following Stoker's novel, in travel writings and diaries, swings between civilization and exoticism, modernity and tradition, autochthonous and Oriental habits, Phanariot and European infusions – that gradually became a nucleus for future stereotypes meant to "Balkanize" this space, to reinvent it in shades from gray to black as night. As Vesna Goldsworthy has put it, a "narrative" colonization took place that shaped dramatically the way the Balkans were perceived by Westerners. Thus, both the fictional works and political interests in the Eastern Question throughout the 19th century molded patterns of neo-colonial behavior that set up the idea of a retrograde, exotic Orient fundamentally opposed to a civilized, highly sophisticated Occident.

This cultural and political "Balkanization" reflects an extremely interesting phenomenon of *imaginative exile*, which cast out the whole South-Eastern European area in a position of ideological periphery. Bram Stoker's Dracula was one of the most powerful examples of this process of literary deport; it started an epoch of vigorous emergence of the Balkans in popular fiction, and made an important contribution to the building of the violent polarities between East and West. Beginning with the turn of the 19th century, the whole imagology surrounding the Balkan area has focused more and more insistently on its barbarism, ethnic heterogeneity, religious mingle, and political unrest that represented genuine threats to the Western middle class' notions of order, regularity, and decorum. The fictions of exile

inaugurated by the Irish authors, or posing a local problem in a foreign geocultural space, have thus ironically gained a new meaning: by constantly evoking the same "demonic" image about "Dracula's land," they have finally shaped the only spiritual identity Transylvania had in Westerners' consciousness. Reduced to the Westerners' *idea* about it, Transylvania was ultimately exiled in a narrow, symbolical, stereotypical place.

c. The Gothic romance and the current vogue of vampire stories in popular culture

Launched in 1764 with Horace Walpole's novel The Castle of Otranto, the Gothic genre proliferated at high speed, symptomatically reflecting the Westerners' escapist impulses and attraction for exotic settings, heroic gestures, and horrifying, often supernatural experiences. Ann Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794), and her even more successful The Italian (1797), Matthew G. Lewis's The Monk (1796), Charles Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer (1820), John Polidori's The Vampyre (1819), Thomas Presket Prest's Varney the Vampyre (1847), and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's Carmilla (1871) are among the best-known Gothic romances that preceded the publication of Bram Stoker's Dracula. As a genre, the Gothic romance is characterized by "a general mood of decay, action that is dramatic and generally violent or otherwise disturbing, loves that are destructively passionate, and settings that are grandiose, if gloomy or bleak" (Murfin and Ray 148). Obviously, given these attributes, it places more emphasis on the story line and setting than on characters, seeking to evoke an atmosphere of horror that results from the reader's hesitation as to the "real" nature of the

events presented. In a structuralist analysis of the genre, Tzvetan Todorov distinguishes between two tendencies within the literary Gothic: that of the "supernatural explained," (or the "uncanny," such as in Clara Reeves and Ann Radcliffe's novels), and the "supernatural accepted" (or the "marvelous," such as in Horace Walpole, M.G. Lewis, and Maturin's novels). The beauty of his approach lies in its neat attempt of setting boundaries; its flaw lies in the difficulty to apply them when analyzing a particular literary work.

According to Leonard Wolf, there are three characteristics that distinguish Dracula from other vampire fictions that preceded it: its use of an authentic vampire folklore, the existence of a dreadful historic figure (Vlad the Impaler), and a place that incorporated them both, Transylvania, The Land Beyond the Forest (xii-xiii). I would add to this description the fact that, unlike in other Gothic novels, the emphasis on the character is obviously greater here, turning Dracula into an emblematic figure and probably the most powerful Gothic stereotype ever. The atmosphere of horror is maintained by the use of a setting sufficiently close to the reader to appear threatening, and also far enough to seem alluringly exotic. The novel may be analyzed as an example of the "uncanny" Gothic, as the Victorian propensity toward a rational explanation of the events is transparent on every page; however, the author's failure to provide us with a sensible explanation of Dracula's abnormality (besides his originating from a "strange" land) forces the reader to uncritically "accept" his "marvelous" nature.

A century later, "with the crisis of rationalist thought, Dracula and his rivals are returning in force" (Reichmann viii). The contemporary horror fiction turned the vampire into "a metaphor for the human condition" (Holte 115), and explored its tormenting struggle to survive in the Western culture at the end of millennium. Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's series of over thirty vampire novels (Hotel Transylvania, 1978, Blood Games (1979), A Flame in Byzantium, 1987, etc.), Fred Sabgerhage's Berserker Series (The Dracula Tape, 1975, The Homes-Dracula File, 1978, etc.), Nancy Collins's Midnight Blue novels (Sunglasses after Dark, 1990, In the Blood, 1992, and Paint It Black, 1995), Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles (Interview with the Vampire, 1986, The Vampire Lestat, 1985, The Tale of the Body Thief, 1992, etc.) are among the best known productions of the genre. All these reinterpretations of the myth attempt to reveal the humane dimension of the character, his heroic, almost Romantic temperament, turning him into a familiar, and therefore less fearsome presence.

Another cultural direction of this shape-shifting process points to the fact that the real and imaginary monsters are sometimes indistinguishable. Again, the Romanian area has provided a vigorous example in the character of Nicolae Ceauşescu, who was turned by the local and international media into a bloodthirsty monster, a sort of communist Dracula, after the fall of his regime in 1989. Dan Simmons's thriller Children of the Night (1992) presents a troubled post-Ceauşescu Romania, and poses the issue of the AIDS contamination of the children through irresponsible blood transfusions, while John Sweeney's The Life and Evil Times of Nicolae

Ceauşescu (1992) makes reference to the popular rumors that Ceauşescu sucked the blood of infants in order to regain his strength. Thus, the allusions to vampire practices have become part of the political discourse, as well as a good pretext for reinterpreting the very concept of Europeanness, seen as "the dividing line between the civilized and the primitive, a racialized separation that is reduplicated throughout the region, pitting Serbs against Croats, Czechs against Slovaks, or Bulgarians against Pomaks" (Glover 144). Transylvania is an example of such a contested terrain, and the Romanian dictator "a political monstrosity of vampiric dimensions, preying upon and perpetuating a backward nation" (Glover 146). Interestingly, the tradition opened by the Gothic novel was continued by modern literary representations, which turned the whole South-Eastern Europe either into an a-historical, mythical space, or into a politically controversial area, reflected by the painful problem of the Balkan peoples' fight for independence. Not before the last century, due to works such as Alan Brownjohn's The Long Shadows, Olivia Manning's Balkan Trilogy, and Paul Bailey's Kitty and Virgil, could the stereotyped image of a barbaric, retrograde Romania gain a more accurate representation.

Although at first it only drew the readers' attention as a thriller, after the 1970s Dracula started to receive scholarly attention, materialized in a significant output of books and articles that offered readings of the novel ranging from sexual or psychoanalytical to feminist or post-colonial. I have attempted to offer a short survey of these often contradictory critical approaches in the previous chapter. The only historic studies worth

mentioning at this point for their accurate analysis of the myth are Radu Florescu and Raymond McNally's books on the reign of Vlad Ţepes, Dracula, a Biography of Vlad the Impaler (1973), In Search of Dracula (1974), and Dracula: Prince of Many Faces (1989).

But even if Dracula has never been out of print since it was first published in 1897, what really brought this story to the foreground was the movie industry. A search of the Internet Movie Database indicates that there are no less that 649 movies that include a reference to Dracula, and more than 160 films that feature Dracula in a major role, a number second only to Sherlock Holmes. The huge appeal of the character is mainly due to the 1931 talkie with Bela Lugosi in the main role. Released at St. Valentine's day, the movie became Universal Pictures' biggest money-maker of the year, and opened a long tradition of Draculas seen as foreign aristocratic patriarchs threatening middle-class values with their abnormal power and conquering impulses. Since then numerous movies came out in succession: among them worth mentioning are Murnau's 1922 Nosferatu (revived by Werner Herzog's movie with the same title in 1979), John Badham's Dracula (1979, with Laurence Olivier and Frank Langella), Blacula (1972), an all-black version of Dracula released by American International, and Count Dracula (1977), a BBC 2-part series rather faithful to the original novel. The Hammer series with Christopher Lee in the main role (Horror of Dracula, 1958) changed the already stereotypical representation of the character, by emphasizing his violent nature and erotic power. The movie was an instant success, and in less than two years it made eight times its original cost: in

2004 it was named by the Total Film magazine as the 30th greatest British film of all time. More recently, the Francis Ford Coppola film, Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992), turned the hero into a romantic character, redeemed by the sacrificial love of a beautiful woman. Placed in a suspectedly orientalized setting, the movie was seen by some critics as "an attempt to pull the numerous images of Dracula together" (Holte 119); unfortunately, in spite of some remarkable shots and an eminent cast, it has almost nothing of the appealing power of Stoker's novel, remaining a sort of modern version of "The Beauty and the Beast."

The hero was also evoked in numerous dramas, ballets, musicals, comics, cartoons, videogames (Castlevania or Akumajo Dracula is a very popular game in Japan) and even children's books, such as Little Dracula Goes to School, Little Dracula at the Seashore, and Little Dracula's First Bite! Cartoon vampires based upon Dracula also include Count Chocula, the animated mascot of the breakfast cereal of the same name. In 2005, a Dracula opera written by the composer Héctor Fabio Torres Cardona was produced in Manizales, Colombia. For those whose interest in the proliferation of this myth extends to the digital world too, the Internet data amount to about 21,400,000 search results only on Google, providing the most unexpected pieces of information, from (erroneous) details regarding Dracula's Castle, or access to Dracula's Library, to invitations to... Dracula's Ball (it took place in September this year in Philadelphia!).

How could be explained this busy cultural traffic that made Dracula's story a bestseller in the 15th century, as well as in the 21st? Outlining an

arena of collective dreams and desires, popular culture has a profoundly mythic dimension that relies organically on structures of repetitions and displays a particular fascination with the abolition of time. Dracula's deathlessness both as a hero and as a narrative is due to him being a receptacle of primordial mysteries that bound death, blood, love, and our obsessive craving for immortality together. The attraction for the vampire figure, with all its connotations of immortality, immorality, forbidden desires, rebellion, power, and eroticism reflects nothing else but the fascination with the darker side of our nature, as well as our subconscious longing for a metaphysical escape. Moreover, Dracula's ambiguous slide between poles of absolute evil and redemptive love, between terror and vulnerability, his conversion from executioner into victim in more recent popular productions disclose a dilution and/or revision of the notions of good and evil that is a characteristic of the modern times. His character answers to the popular taste for mystery, ambiguity, and danger, leading by far a series of "monstrous" heroes that blur the traditional boundaries between wickedness and decorum, and that includes, among others, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, R.L. Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll, and A. Conan Doyle's Moriarty. Finally, the hero is highly adaptable, and we are not referring now only to his rich polymorphousness; he also exerts a huge power of fascination that made artists, film-makers, and writers create new works inspired by his personality. In fact, as Elizabeth Miller noticed, "every generation creates its own Count Dracula, reflecting the fears, anxieties, and fantasies of its own time."

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And probably there is one more reason for Dracula's power of seduction over Westerners. (It was brought to my attention by my daughter who dressed herself up as Dracula when invited to the Halloween party organized by the American Embassy in Bucharest, a few years ago). The Romanian hero makes a good match with this Western holiday whose props of frightening ghosts, strolling skeletons, wicked witches, and scary freaks reflect the same taste for mystery and exultation as the Transylvanian myth. Not to mention the fact that, over the last few years, Halloween became a customary holiday in Sighişoara (Vlad the Impaler's birthplace) or Braşov (the count's alleged residence), which reflects an extremely interesting phenomenon of cross-cultural exchange.

CHAPTER III

Other Stereotypical Images about the Balkans and Romania. The Romanian Diaspora and "Geocultural Bovarism"

a. The Balkans as a "demonic" area. The oxymoronic image of Romania abroad

Dracula's export as a local historical figure, which started in the 15th century with the invention of the printing press, his revival in Irish version in the 19th century as a Gothic romance, his huge vogue as a threatening invader and sex-symbol launched by the movie industry in the 20th century, and his ironical return to his native land as a Halloween prop in the 21st, point to Dracula's incredible ability to transgress national borders, as well as to speak various cultural languages. Moreover, his obsessive nostalgia for escaping outside the confinement of anonymity turned him into a haunting national metaphor, since for Romanians "the myth of exile was imbedded archetypally in [their] culture" (Codrescu 38). As a self-exiled (Romanian) émigré, Dracula is attracted to the West by the mirage of its power and cultural sophistication, and brings from the East a tormenting obsession with his own limitations in terms of historical significance. His leap outside the local boundaries is a symptom of this national inadequacy complex, and it may have, according to some critics, a civilizational dimension:

> Dracula, the myth invented by aggrieved [Saxon, *my note*] merchants, became the basis for the vampire of Bram Stoker, while Dracula the politician invented nationalism, which is also

> a form of vampirism, whereby the terrible suction of central government drains the life from the loose, autonomous city-states. The modern world was born from the dual text of a provincial Balkan ruler: the fascination of reading began the drive toward centralization and mechanization. (Codrescu 16)

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Part of a borderline zone, half Oriental and half European, Romania's "oxymoronic image" (Andras) in the European cultural and political landscape exemplifies in a superlative way a polarization phenomenon that started, according to some analysts, as early as 18th century, and which opposes the civilized West to the retrograde, underdeveloped, threatening East. According to Larry Wolff (Inventing Eastern Europe, 1994), the Renascentist cultural division between the Northern and Southern Europe was replaced during the Enlightenment by a new split that reflected an increase in the Westerners' ideological self-interest and their narcissistic project of self-promotion in a newly imagined geography. By tracing the political consequences of such a division back to the West's decision to fight the Crimean War, the Eastern campaigns of Nazi Germany, and the Iron Curtain of the Cold War, Wolff compellingly demonstrates the reductive way in which the concept of Eastern Europe tied together countries and peoples with great differences of wealth, culture, religion, history and language, by instating false ethnic and linguistic connections among them and proclaiming their commonly shared barbarism.

In Imagining the Balkans (1997), Maria Todorova discusses the invention of the "Bakan" and "Balkanization" as negative categories in the 20th century, based on the geographical uncertainty of the peoples in the area, on their violence and political unrest, on their economically precarious conditions, as well as on what Joseph Roucek called the "handicap of heterogeneity" that defined the ethnic variety of the region. Events such as the assassination of Alexander and Draga in Serbia, the confusing Macedonian situation, the Bosnian crisis, the Balkan Wars (and, I could add, the violent uprising against Ceauşescu and the subsequent interethnic conflicts in Romania) provided sufficient support for the perception of the Balkans as a turbulent and politically unstable space. A more moderate taxonomy emerged during the Cold War era, which replaced Balkanism with terms such as Eastern or South-Eastern Europe, and which was adjusted again, during the 1980s, to the notion of Central Europe. The difference is politically subtle, as it opposes the historical trajectory of the Soviet Union to the distinct historical development of the countries under the Soviet influence, which try this way to distinguish themselves from the radical Stalinist ideology and force an escape outside the communist "block." The term Balkanism was brought back by the Wars of Yugoslav Succession (also called by the British journalist Misha Glenny the "Third Balkan War," an allusion to the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913) that restored to it its initial connotation of political unrest.

Interestingly, Todorova argues that Balkanism is not another form of Orientalism, and bases her argumentation on the very vagueness of the

notion of "Orient" as developed by E. W. Said. A metaphor for the forbidden, sensual, feminine East, and a refuge from the alienation of industrialization, Orientalism is opposed, in her opinion, to Balkanism that is neither forbidden, nor sensual, but male, primitive, and disheveled. Moreover, as mentioned before, Balkanism is only a transitional concept with still fluctuating connotations. Even more importantly, the self-perception of the Balkan people is not colonial, their self-identity is itself created against an Oriental "other." Finally, Todorova argues that the racial dimension of Orientalism (which opposes white to non-white people) is missing in the case of Balkanism, and replaced by a strong vein of ethnic ideology.

In a seductive demonstration of the "narrative" or "textual" colonization of the Balkans by the British beginning in the 19th century (Inventing Ruritania. The Imperialism of Imagination, 1998), Vesna Goldsworthy argues that the two most notable literary contributions to this phenomenon are the imaginary world of Ruritania, created by Anthony Hope in Prizoner of Zenda (1894), and of Transylvania, as evoked by Bram Stoker in Dracula (1897). As she correctly observes, "Popular novels set in fictitious Balkan kingdoms contrast 'Englishness' and 'Europeanness', as well as 'Englishness' and 'Balkanness'. To be English means to be superior to both, as 'Balkanness' is shown to be only the most extreme, often childish, form of European 'Otherness'" (69). From this perspective, both Ruritania and Transylvania are associated in the popular English imagination with the Balkans due to the focus of the British press of the time on the erratic (mainly Germanic) Balkan dynasties, which were regarded with anxiety and

manifest distrust. According to Goldsworthy, the idea of the Balkans as a threatening place that may entice Westerners in a sort of exotic and malefic trap has known a predictable revival after the collapse of the communist regimes in the area.

In this context of hyperactive nationalistic identity shaping and insistent revaluation of the power relations that characterized the area, "imagining the Balkans, and oneself in relation to the Balkans, has been a Romanian intellectual pastime for roughly two centuries" (Antohi). Begun in their 18th century, this process of Balkanization occurred during the period of direct foreign rule of Moldavia and Wallachia by their thirty-one Phanariot princes, serving seventy-five times on the two thrones. It was a process whereby the political, social, and economic life structure, as well as the high and low cultures were brought closer to Levant through the local boyars' efforts to create a Balkan confederation (idea advanced by the Thessalian poet Rhigas Phereos and taken up by Mazzini in the 1840s) meant to provide a shield against Russian expansionism. "Balcania" was supposed to be the rallying vision in the Balkan peoples' fight for emancipation from Ottoman domination; its last expression was, in the 1950s, the idea of the "Helvetization of Romania" advanced by Petre Pandrea, who aimed at Romania's integration into a Balkan anti-Soviet federation. The same idea was supported by other important intellectuals, such as Victor Papacostea, who imagined Balcania as a "natural fortress of a great geographic unity" meant to prevent the rebirth of rapacious empires ("Balcania," 1936). Interestingly enough, this project was relaunched more than a century later:

in 1997, Adam Demaqi, the leader of the Parliamentary Party of Kosovo, advanced the idea of a confederation of Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro that was to be called "Balkania."

Beyond the obvious political dimension of this construction of the Other by the periphery, which aims at reversing the poles of power through a system of alliances, it is interesting to observe the glamorization of otherness performed by the normative Other, by the Westerner, who constantly recycled the idea of Balkan barbarity by projecting romanticized images of the Balkan Haiduk, the Gypsy musician, the *paysan du Danube*, the Polish or Hungarian (fake) aristocrat, the *fin-de-siècle* (Romanian) prototype of the Latin Lover, the Turkish-Balkan *picaro*, etc. As Sorin Antohi compellingly demonstrated, "The Other, including the Balkan Other, has also been imagined as the West's anthropological Utopia, as the Westerner's alternative, or possible self." Paul Morand's novel Bucarest (1936) and Hermann Keyserling's study Das Spektrum Europas (1928), for instance, propagate the Romanians' *folie des grandeurs* and their self-ascribed civilizing role in the Balkans as promoters of the Byzantine tradition. Also, the Balkan mythologies of (self-)victimization can be rendered as manifestations of an "activation of the negative" phenomenon (Antohi), a proactive attitude that aims at breaking the historical confinement of the Balkan countries in a position of subalternity. Cioran's distressing question, "Comment peut-on etre Roumain?" ("How can one be a Romanian?"), for instance, suggests the idea of the negative *excellence* of his nation; Romania is no longer a white spot on the European map, its inertia and "relaxation in

the face of Necessity" ("A Little Theory of Destiny" 72) are actually symptoms of its Balkan sensibility, which it exemplifies in a superlative way: "(..) have we not, in the face of universal dilettantism, the consolation of possessing, with regard to pain, a professional competence?" (73). In this vein, such mythologies construct the mesmerizing stereotype of a hero confronting his own destiny and tragically assuming his ethnic stigma.

This position of the Romanians as mediators between West and East is best emphasized by Mateiu Caragiale's motto to his novel Craii de Curtea Veche (1929), the finest expression of literary Balkanism in Romanian culture: "What do you want, we are here at the gates of the Orient, where everything is taken lightly..." Symbolically placing themselves into this port of entry, into a sort of civilizational limbo that provides access between two realms antithetically defined, Romanians seem not to belong to any of these symbolical representations, they are neither in the Orient (translated as Balkan area), nor in the Occident. Moreover, the suggestion of a "carefree" behavioral pattern points to their belonging to a decadent space defined by duplicity, lack of work ethic, dandyism, attitudinal *laisez faire*, and failed Europeanism. This hesitation between two dispositions, between Western civilization and Balkan exoticism, defines, in fact, the Romanian national identity; as Victor Ivanovici inspiredly put it, "to be Romanian means to be Romanian *and* something else" (qtd. in Antohi).

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Although the political discourses kept underlying the Western orientation of Romania, as the only Latin oasis in a sea of Slavic peoples,

and presented it as the last outpost of "civilized" Europe and the West's natural ally, having a strategic geopolitical position due to the natural barrier it represented against Russian expansion – they only rarely and for a short time succeeded to settle Westerners' doubts. The affirmative images about Romanians, mainly supported by their performances in sports widely mediated by press and television, have been counter-balanced in the last decades by the image of a society confronted with deep divisions and resentments that often led to public violence. The uprising against Ceauşescu in December 1989, the interethnic street-fighting in Târgu-Mureş in March 1990, the successive arrivals of the miners in Bucharest in order to beat up the student protesters, the ecological disaster, the economic breakdown, the recurrent news about the crimes of Romanian gypsies, or the dramatic reports about the Romanian orphans infected with AIDS – have created the image of an insecure, poverty-stricken place, "different" from any ex-Communist country in that "by every measure, Romania is at the bottom of European heap" (Judt). In order to reinforce these political and economic stereotypes, further arguments have been brought to support the idea of a "nation that suffered serial historical humiliations" (Judt) that explain, on the one hand, the violent outbursts that filled the front pages of the international newspapers, and, on the other hand, the paradoxical resignation of the Romanians in front of historical vicissitudes. This love-hate attitude toward Romania has been best explained by Sorin Antohi in a brief survey of its pendulum movement between centers of power:

> As a whole, (...) Romania is hard to put on Europe's mental map. During the Cold War, things seemed clear-cut: being placed on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain, the country fully belonged to Eastern Europe. When, in 1989, the latter category was found by the West to be embarrassingly loaded, Romania was included in Central Europe, to everybody's surprise: the Cold War Central Europeans - Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and, somewhat reluctantly, Poland -, very vocal in the late 1970s and in the 1980s thanks to prominent figures such as Milan Kundera and Gyorgy Konrad, were unhappy to associate themselves with Romania. (...) Under the circumstances, the Western initiative to expand the notion of Central Europe as to include Romania couldn't convince anybody.

Unfortunately, this perception has changed very little in the last decades. An extremely interesting study initiated by the PRO Institute in June 2001 ("Romania in the Mirrors: Romanian Stereotypes"), and intended to highlight the perceptional differences of – or about – Romanians, revealed the fact that the view of Romania as a Balkanized democracy, hopelessly shipwrecked at the periphery of history (to echo Mircea Eliade's words) is still a sad reality. While the self-reference stereotypes (i.e. values and attitudes that Romanians self-assign as a way of ethnic/national definition) emphasize their hospitality, diligence, kindness, assiduity and intelligence, the hetero-reference stereotypes (i.e. values and attitudes that Romanians assign to "significant others") indicate the fact that, even if the Romanians

have important trust investments in the Western area and significant expectations derived from this investment, Romania is the country that collected the most negative opinions regarding its possible European integration. Such a position reflects the negative stereotypes that define the Romanian "blind mirror," as opposed to the "open mirror" that describes the features similarly valorized both by Romanians and by the "significant other," and that represent the foundation on which their communication is established. Simply put, I love you, but you love me not.

This ambivalent attitude toward Romania has shaped a symbolic geography that either included it within the European borders, or violently rejected it. It also fueled a sort of national pessimism whose ultimate expression was Mircea Eliade's urge to "boycott history," to exit from a local destiny to eternity and release the Romanian intellectual energies in order to create a world-level culture. The irony of his solution is that the very idea of belonging to a particular geography dissolves, the borders are no longer significant, and exile is embraced as a cathartic solution. To be inside or outside the Balkans, at the gates of the Orient or beyond them, becomes irrelevant when regarded from the universalistic perspective of this cultural project.

b. The "tragedy of small cultures" and the mirage of the "blessed land"

At a cultural level, this attitude of disbelief in the necessity of a clear-cut nationalistic agenda is echoed by many prominent representatives of the Romanian diaspora, such as Mircea Eliade, Eugène Ionesco, or Emil Cioran.

The "metaphysical exile" Cioran speaks about is justified, in his opinion, by a historical curse:

> There are countries which enjoy a kind of benediction: everything succeeds for them, even their misfortunes, even their catastrophes; and there are others which cannot carry it off, whose very triumphs are equivalent to failures. When they seek to assert themselves, to leap forward, an external fatality intervenes to break their spring and bring them back to their point of departure. ("A Little Theory of Destiny," 69-70)

Initially rejecting the local "sub-eternity" and the "vast cycles of failures" that turned into an ethnic stigma, the Romanian philosopher chose exile as the only possibility of escaping the "system of disasters" that defined his national ethos. "I have no nationality – the best possible status for an intellectual," Cioran introduces himself, or reinvents himself, as "a man who repudiates his language for another changes his identity, even his disappointments" (Cioran, "Advantages of Exile" 74). Nevertheless, this effort to escape from the fatality of history finally sends the émigré in a "Nowhere City, a patrie in reverse" (77), which is but another expression of one's failure to assert him/(his true) self.

If we enlarge the perspective and try to analyze this phenomenon at a less personal level, we may see that it is a part of a more general pattern that shapes directions for the small countries that are, indeed, "different" from the successful trajectories of the big ones. What Cioran called "the tragedy of small cultures" represents not only a painful awareness of their

peripheral position in history, but also an even more painful understanding of the fact that such an acknowledgment may result in sterility and abandonment. We still ask ourselves the same disturbing questions Constantin Noica formulated in 1944: "How can great personalities appear in a world where anonymity is the rule? How is it possible for a 'person' to appear in a place where the personality category is missing?" (7) Are the small nations doomed to distinguish themselves only by their tormenting search for identity and their uncertain democracies, while their personalities have to choose exile in order to become finally known?

This disposition of the Romanian intellectuals to leapfrog into a better place has been called by Sorin Antohi "geocultural Bovarism," and it describes the "deeply entrenched idea that this country is intimately connected to the West, especially to France, and more precisely to Paris." This idea is almost two centuries old, and the inter-war designation of Bucharest as "little Paris" (or, more correctly, the "little Paris of the Balkans") is just another endorsement of the Romanian intellectuals' francophone sympathies. Begun with the revolutionary generation of the 1840s, when a large number of Moldavians and Wallachians attended Paris universities, this trend supported an ambitious political and diplomatic project that aimed at laying the foundations of modern Romania. It was a program of systematic imitation of the West that was probably best summarized in Nicolae Iorga's memorable words: "A country does not belong to the space where it stands, but to the target it looks at" ("What is the European South-East?"; qtd. in Antohi). The Romanians' Western

nostalgia gave them a cultural direction and ultimately a better cultural perspective that provided many Romanian intellectuals with an escape from historical or political adversities.

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Always "cornered by politics," "minor literatures" (Longinovici , 30-31), and especially the literatures of the South-Eastern Europe, have continually questioned their identity, addressing issues such as the individual's relationship with the institutionalized power, the role of the intellectuals in a totalitarian regime (in the case of former communist countries), their dramatic lack of historic choices, or their unfavorable geopolitical location that fenced them in a position of marginality - in a language that systematically eluded a direct, provocative display of one's agenda. Their discursive strategies have included experimental narratives, an often dangerous game of anti-totalitarian doublespeak, and an aesthetic of "resistance" through culture that promoted an alternative ideological, social, and imaginative model to the Soviet-inspired "socialist realism" formula. The continuous effort of the South-Eastern literatures to assert themselves in spite of an unfavorable geopolitical context fed up a sense of alienation which resulted either in the deliberate relocation (or banishment) of their intellectuals outside the national borders, or in more radical expressions of political unrest. Ultimately, "whether 'velvety' as in Czechoslovakia, or bloody as in Romania, the anti-communist revolutions of 1989 attempted to bridge the wide gap that had divided words from deeds, self from world, culture from politics" (Cornis-Pope, "The Unfinished Battles" 8).

In the case of the Romanian culture, however, this process took a different, more radical turn, as its francophone tradition and obsession with the civilizing prevalence of the West manifested themselves earlier and more powerfully than in any other country from this part of Europe. The Romanian intellectuals who left the country for Paris or Zürich at the beginning of the 20th century contributed to and even initiated some of the most radical cultural revolutions of the West. The belatedness complex of the Romanian culture, or the obsession with its lack of synchronization with Western cultural movements, has thus been healed in the 1920s through the efforts of Constantin Brâncuşi, a pioneer of the abstract sculpture in Paris, Tristan Tzara, Marcel Iancu, and Victor Brauner, the founders of the Dadaist movement at Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich, Ilarie Voronca, a founder of the surrealist movement in France and, even earlier, through the "anti-prose" of Urmuz, " a Dadaist before dada and a surrealist before surrealism" (Cugno 8). This moment represented the most important and fertile manifestation of the Romanian creative force on the international arena. A post-war syndrome and "a revolt against a world capable of unspeakable horrors" (Tzara), Dada promoted the radical idea of "anti-art," encouraged the "abolition of logic, which is the dance of those impotent to create" (Tzara), and was a plea for nihilism, irrationality, randomness and nonconformism in art, as well as in everyday life. As Tristan Tzara put it, "God and my toothbrush are Dada, and New Yorkers can be Dada too, if they are not already." Interestingly, the Dada movement did cross the ocean (in 1916 the American artists Man Ray and Beatrice Wood became the

center of radical anti-art activities in the United States) and turned into a (less disillusioned) critique of traditionalism in art.

The second phase of Romanian avant-garde took the surrealist movement a step further, with the work of Isidore Isou, the inventor of the "Lettrism," an artistic style even more radical than Dada, which intended to chisel art down not to the word, but to the letter. The Romanian surrealists of the 1940s also included Gherasim Luca, the inventor of "cubomania" (a collage method whereby a picture is cut into squares which are then reassembled without regard for the image), who also signed, together with Dolfi Trost, the manifesto of surautomatism in 1945 ("Dialetic of Dialectic"). Also known as a "message addressed to the international surrealistic movement," this statement calls for "the transformation of desire into the reality of desire," for the preservation of surrealism "in a state of continual revolution," and for the gradual growth of the arbitrary in images, idea echoed by André Breton later on. As a method of "indecipherable writing," it advanced the suggestion of conceiving the text as image, and advocated the use of "aplastic, objective and entirely non-artistic procedures" (Luca and Trost 625).

The impact of the movements initiated by the Romanian intellectuals and artists is obviously due to the fact that they emerged in a favorable cultural milieu, either in France, Switzerland, Germany, or Austria, and it exemplifies a felicitous process of cultural export that manifested itself in fields as varied as picture, sculpture, dramaturgy, poetry, or fiction writing. Its culmination came probably in the striking work of the playwright Eugène

Ionesco, one of the initiators and best-known representatives of the Theater of the Absurd. The internationalization of culture phenomenon started by Dada's explosive avowal of individual freedom owes much to this generation of Romanian intellectuals that chose exile as a means of spiritual survival.

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The lack of significance of political borders contained in the idea of "metaphysical exile" advanced by Cioran in the sixties has been beautifully paraphrased by Andrei Codrescu in the nineties as a "metaphorical exile," favored, in his opinion, by "times of great freedom" (46-47). A Romanian émigré in the United States, Codrescu discusses in The Disappearance of the Outside. A Manifesto for Escape the benefits of exile seen as "the pure Outside," "a substantial territory, a psychological place of vast dimensions," "an archipelago... inhabited mainly by creative citizens" (39-40). Interpreting Mioriţa (The Ewe Lamb), the Romanians' most controversial myth of identity, as "the moving border of the nation," "a storytelling border" that "calls into being a place and people that she circumscribes with narrative" (2), he poetically attempts to explain the Romanian spirit through the Romanian landscape. The ballad narrates the violent death of a shepherd whose story is allegorically retold by his favorite ewe lamb as a cosmic wedding, and has (far too often) been interpreted as a symptom of the Romanians' passive acceptance of their fate. By taking the (narrative) center with her to the circumference, Mioriţa projects the national curse on a universal canvas, turning a local event into a myth of global significance. The ewe lamb is also an *alter ego* of the artist himself, who takes the center

of his origin with him into the "storytelling nation" of his metaphysical exile, by deciding that "Romania was whatever I said it was" (43).

The idea is not new, and it has been theorized by Hommi Bhabha in the well-known study Nation and Narration (1990), where he makes a compelling demonstration of the organic connection between a nation's sense of itself and the narrative strategies employed in constructing its cultural identity. Notions such as the "metaphor of landscape," "nation-time," "nation-space," or the relationship existing between "Territory" and "Tradition" are discussed as means of defining an ethnocultural disposition. These alternative versions of national representation reflect, in the case of small cultures, a strenuous effort to legitimize their distinctive place in the concert of nations. Rather than reading the idea of "nation" restrictively, as "the ideological apparatus of state power," Bhabha considers, together with Frantz Fanon, that national consciousness is different from nationalism, and that only by this process of active reinterpretation of the metropolis by the periphery could we displace the "center" and internationalize cultural phenomena. The discourse of the migrants, of the disenfranchised minorities, has, thus, almost a therapeutic function: it points to the fact that "history happens outside the center and the core" and that "national" cultures are increasingly produced from the perspective of the political diaspora, the economic refugees, or the postcolonial emigrants. Such a discourse heals the self-sufficiency symptoms and superiority complexes of the metropolitan states by infusing them with an awareness of their inherent multiculturalism. However, this effort of rewriting the history from

the margins is not only a matter of cultural export: in the process of describing their own national identity, the South-Eastern European countries are continually redefining the cultural centers from a position that no longer reinforces "minor" vs. "major" dichotomies. Thus, "rather than simply imitate the literary experiences of the West, the Russian, Polish, Czech, Hungarian, and Romanian 'peripheries' dissipated and restructured 'core romanticism,' fitting it to specific regional needs. Their 'patterns of substitutions' exerted a counter-pull, which helped redefine Europe's culture as 'polycentric'" (Corniş-Pope, "The Unfinished Battles" 160).

A possible solution for harmonizing these diverse cultural identities is, in the opinion of some scholars, the acceptance of the "difference" and "specificity" as distinctive traits, and the discovery of the "middle ground" between East and West in the re-emergence of the Central European cultures, in the diasporic literatures, in the cultural coexistence and ideological exchange that offer more effective and urgent models than the political mechanisms. In this context, literary culture can play the role of a mediating conscience between the Eastern and Western national doctrines, by laying stress not on competition, but on co-operation, dialogue and the specific contribution each nation can bring to the configuration of new relational paradigms. Moreover, cultural export should gradually turn from a phenomenon of ideological coagulation around centers of intellectual relevance into a symptom of the emerging transnationalism that defines the cultural milieu at the beginning of the 21st century. What happens today, "the new tensions between global interdependence and ethnocentrism,

between cultural centers and peripheries, indicate a crisis at the level of our modes of cultural interaction (...) That is why it is imperiously necessary to re-examine the topographic and identity definitions on which the so-called 'new international order' is based at present, so that we may see how they perpetuate older, reductive stereotypes and interpretations" (Corniş-Pope, "România la răscruce").

c. The Romanian presence in America. The stereotype of the "other" vs. the stereotype of the "self"

According to The History of the United Romanians Society (1997), the 1990 Census of the United States listed 365,544 individuals who declared themselves of Romanian ancestry; they resided in every state of the Union, being the 20th largest of the 71 European ethnic groups recognized in America. The first Romanian recorded in America was Father Samuil Damian, a Romanian Orthodox priest from Transylvania who corresponded with Benjamin Franklin in Latin about electricity, before settling in Charleston, South Carolina.

During the American Civil War (1861-1865), several Romanians, such as George Pomutz and Nicolae Dunca, fought as volunteers on the Union side. Another Romanian-born soldier, Constantin Teodoresco, is known to have died in the Spanish-American War in 1898. Throughout the decades, over 15,000 Romanians served in the American and Canadian armies during both World Wars, in Korea and Vietnam, where hundreds died and many distinguished themselves in battle.

The first significant wave of Romanian immigrants started to arrive after 1880, most of them from Transylvania, Banat, and Bucovina, territories under Austro-Hungarian rule, where political, ethnic, and religious persecution, as well as precarious economic conditions forced them to leave their homes. They settled in New York, New Jersey, and the cities of the Midwest, finding employment in factories, mines and on railroads. Between 1921 and 1939, the number of the Romanians that entered the United States decreased to only 603 per year, as a result of the Immigration Act of 1924. Unlike the earlier immigrants, who were mainly farmers and laborers, most of those who did enter the country after 1924 were students and professionals who made a more notable contribution to American society.

The second wave of Romanian immigrants, numbering approximately 30,000, arrived between 1948 and 1953, as a consequence of the Displaced Persons Act (1947), which was passed to help absorb the flood of immigrants from postwar Europe. Either refugees that left the country as a result of persecutions of the Communist regime, or exiles that were already abroad at the time of its setting up, they settled approximately in the same areas as the first immigrants. Mostly professionals, they were more active politically and fought from exile against the Communist rule at home.

The third wave of Romanian immigrants, consisting mainly of political refugees, arrived after the signing of the Helsinki Agreement in 1974, and settled in the cities of the West, South-West and South. Finally, a fourth wave of immigrants arrived after December 1989, year that marked the end

of the communist dictatorship in Romania. It was estimated that, in 2000, there were close to one million Romanian people in the United States and Canada (Hofbacovici).

Such data, briefly presented as it is, seems nevertheless poignant when trying to find out the reasons that made so many people embrace and even die for a cause not long before strange to them, far away from their homes, customs and families. It is a page of our common history, but what struck me was that it also unveils *the history of their dreams, expectations, and hopes*, a history of some people belonging to a nation of peasants for whom the land was the greatest value, and who tried to start a new life in what they called "the promised land," "the country of all opportunities," or "the new world." Amazingly condensing a whole chapter of imaginary geography, this last syntagma contains both the mythic idea of re-birth in a better place, and that of a new chance, of a reward that would heal all the sufferings of the past. What drove them here were these stereotypical images of a blessed land, and it is quite astonishing, sociologically speaking, how the power of these symbolic representations could replace almost all the values they had previously built their lives on.

The symbolic descriptions put into circulation by the displaced Romanian intelligentsia are not far from this stereotypical construction of America as *the Center*, as a *space* of spiritual freedom that metaphorically exemplifies the absolute emancipation from socio-political pressures. Interestingly, the relationship described by these stereotypes is not a personal one (which would have implied hierarchical positions of power), but

spatial, imaginative, and utopian. This allows for a highly idealized geographical and spiritual representation of the "free world" as a final destination point, an almost mythical place of huge regenerative power. As "the land of the free," America epitomizes a democratic realm that could provide the émigré ideological freedom and more effective opportunities for political action. This idea was loudly proclaimed by one of the first broadcasts of the Radio Free Europe in New York (July 16, 1950), which anticipated the victory against the communist regime in Romania, symbolized in the "flickering light of freedom," waiting at the end of the "emancipation road" (qtd. in Manolescu 303). Similarly, the journal Romania published between 1956 and 1971 in New York was intended to support "the fight for liberation of the oppressed countries" (qtd. in Manolescu 605), while Agora, a cultural periodical published under the aegis of the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia, underlined the benefic effects of this spiritual relocation: "While the Romanian culture has been torn up by its spiritual roots, its true roots could be transplanted beyond the national frontiers and they could spread throughout the world" (qtd. in Manolescu 33). Additionally, America, one of the most long-lasting journals of the Romanians in the United States (the first issue was released in 1906), explains the "blessings of the American democracy which relies on the acknowledgment of the divine providence and on the observance of the individual right of the citizens" (qtd. in Manolescu 46).

All these diasporic discourses reiterate the idea of a spiritually blessed land, as well as the remonstrative mission of the Romanian exile.

America is stereotypically described as a mythical space, a place of origin, a sort of Ithaca where the refugee longs to return: "Each émigré is an Ulysses on his way to Ithaca. Any 'real' existence reproduces the Odyssey: the way to Ithaca, the way to the Center. (...) But in order to understand that, the émigré must understand the deep meaning of his wanderings and to conceive them as a long series of initiation experiences ... and as obstacles on his way back home" (Eliade, Journal, January 1st, 1960; qtd. in Manolescu 285). Contradictorily, this transfer is seen by Ioan Petru Culianu as a bold departure from the origins and a painful initiation experience: "The deportee is the one who dares to break loose from the matrix, who dares to 'pull out from the bank,' who evades 'in another realm,' whose rules he doesn't know and he will have to learn and accept through suffering. He is the hero of a tale, an orphan who proves to be at the same time vulnerable and infinitely powerful. He is – irrespective of his physical age – the adolescent who is subject to a virile process of initiation" ("Exile," August 19th, 1975; qtd. in Manolescu 222). Seen either as an impulse to find a spiritual center or as a painful, ex-centric effort to discover one's true self, this movement is interestingly equated with gaining a sort of knowledge that ultimately enriches the one who experiences it.

The "difference" between their native society and the new one is acutely felt by some Romanian intellectuals as an alienation from their culture of origin; for them, the price of liberty is a continuous struggle between "adapting to the new society and preserving their identity" (Petru Popescu, Agora, 1978; qtd. in Manolescu 576), between (finally) having the

chance of freely expressing themselves and losing the suggestive power of their native tongue. This "difference" is also described as the "normality of democracy" and "freedom from any doctrinarian restrictions" (Vladimir Tismaneanu; qtd. in Manolescu 662) that opposes the American ideals to the communist dictatorship at home. America is depicted in the diasporic productions as a symbol of the unrestrained opportunities of asserting one's self, as well as an alluring space of economic and spiritual wealth.

Thus, an interesting phenomenon of counter-stereotyping performed from the margins occurs, whereby the diaspora rehearses and reinforces the positive representations of the empowered Other, in its attempt to assimilate the values of (and also to be assimilated into) the dominant culture. From "an object of desire and derision" (Bhabha 294), the stereotype turns into an object of desire and admiration. Even more significantly, in this process the diaspora is also actively promoting a stereotyped image of itself that unconsciously reinforces its own subaltern position. Only from the distance of critical analysis can this cultural encounter be regarded, to use Bhabha's term, as "hybridization," and understood as a de-authorization and counter-influence phenomenon with benefic consequences for both cultures. A new terrain of radical, non-hierarchical reinterpretation of this power relationship can thus emerge in an attempt to bring the native cultures and the diasporic productions into a dialogic relation.

Over the years, the mirage of a (culturally speaking) "blessed land" determined numerous Romanian intellectuals to choose the exile. Writers such as Matei Călinescu, Andrei Codrescu, Mircea Eliade, Ioan Petru

Culianu, Radu A. Florescu, Virgil Nemoianu, Petru Popescu, or Dorin Tudoran, painters such as Georgeta Florica Gigi Aramescu, Sandra Aura Blassian, Cătălina Mateescu-Bogdan, Laetiția Bucur, Dumitru Cionca, Adrian Contici, Paul Danington-Cismaş, Devis Grebu, Daniel Motz, or Alexandra Nechita, sculptors such as Constantin Tico Aramescu, Patriciu Mateescu, or Olga Porumbaru – confirmed, in an ironical way, the "quest for success" myth embodied by America: initially seduced by its glamour, they finally seduced it, with the uniqueness of their art.

d. Post-scriptum: the use and misuse of stereotypes

"What do Americans see when they look at a Romanian?" asks Andrei Codrescu in The Disappearance of the Outside. "Three things: Dracula, Eugene Ionesco, and Nadia Comăneci. In other words, sex, the absurd, and gymnastic ability" (42). This survey is an attempt to look beyond these stereotypic representations that confine Romania to a horizon of negative references, and also to demonstrate how the constant impulse of the Romanian intellectuals to escape the historical and geopolitical adversities has produced some of the most innovative avant-gardist movements of the 20th century. As Andrei Codrescu correctly observed (although the significance of these moments is only superficially explored in his book), what the West sees when looking at this corner of Europe are actually three moments of enormous cultural significance: Dracula's narrative turned into myth by the invention of printing press in the 15th century, the surrealist movement that propelled the Romanian intellectuals in the forefront of world culture toward the middle of the 20th century, and the remarkable

performances of the Romanian sportsmen and sportswomen widely advertised by mass media in the second half of the 20th century. Two recurrent themes seem to define the Romanian national identity in the Westerners' eyes: their negative excellence and propensity toward monstrous (literary as well as political) representations, as well as a constant impulse toward escaping the confinement of a provincial, turbulent, highly unstable landscape. Significantly, Dracula's myth condenses both these stereotypical representations: the hero is the epitome of the Romanian refugee, seeking a new identity outside a space cursed by anonymity, and also a grotesque embodiment of the menacing East, a symbol of the ominous Balkania that threatens to take over the civilized West.

What distinguishes this stereotyping process from other similar attempts to represent the Other is its exclusive proliferation through cultural channels, either when exported from the South-Eastern Europe, or when constructing its own representations of the privileged West. As I have attempted to demonstrate in this analysis, in the case of cultural stereotypes, the inaccuracies that occur in this construction of the Other are not due, as Bhabha put it, to the *fixity* of such representations, to the "arrested and fetishistic" knowledge (298) they try to promote. They are caused by more subtle and subversive mechanisms that have to account for the geographical gaps and cultural mediation that represent more powerful and distorting filters than the racial immobility of the colonial gaze. My account reconsiders the stereotype from a historical perspective, as a highly

dynamic phenomenon subject to surprising reformulations in various epochs; it also reconsiders the stereotype from a cultural and geographical perspective, as a flawed representation of the Other characterized by a continual process of reassessment and renegotiation. This analysis has thus a more ambitious goal, attempting to offer a new understanding of the notion of cultural stereotype itself.

From this perspective, Dracula's stereotypical correlation with the Transylvanian area and, more widely, with Romanians, may be considered a phenomenon with *positive connotations*, even if only for tourists' purposes. The propagation of the myth has had as an immediate result an overflow of visitors looking for the mysterious background promised by the widely-advertised story of the Wallachian prince, that turned Bran Castle (wrongly identified with Dracula's residence) into a "haunted," as well as "hunted" objective. Moreover, a recent project aiming at building a huge "Dracula Park" promises to compete successfully with "Disneylands" in the United States and France. Such an initiative is another illustration of a process whereby each nation creates (and reinforces) its own stereotypes about itself, and of the limits of this phenomenon, in terms of historical direction and accuracy.

*

The extraordinary power of the stereotypes in general, and of the cultural stereotypes in particular, comes from their virus-like capacity of spreading through interpersonal communication. The distance between our beliefs about others and their prejudices about us is mediated by language,

and by our capacity to convey and transmit judgments in a cogent manner. This is a highly dynamic process that depicts a movement in a double direction: we do not only generate our own stereotypes, but also absorb the stereotypes created by the significant Other, and thus, through transmission and interaction, they become culturally-shared. The Western stereotypical correlation of Romania with "Dracula's land" has the same symbolic value, from this perspective, as the Eastern-European representation of America as the "land of opportunities," and urges us to reconsider the notions of central and marginal cultures from a more accurate and critical perspective.

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Vita

Ileana Florentina Popa was born in December 21, 1967 in Bucharest, and is a Romanian citizen. She received her Bachelor of Arts from University of Bucharest, College of Letters, in February 1991, and the Master of Arts in English from Virginia Commonwealth University, in May, 2006.